

Bem Returns

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Summary: Bem returns to Earth after Astro has saved the world from the over heating sun. This story is a sequel to Episode 193 of the 1963 Anime series, and Episode 62 of the ELV of the same.

Bem Returns

****He'd **planned to get clear of the super bomb and make his way back home. He knew just how long the fuse was, and just how far away he'd have to get to be safe from the blast. Bem had promised Astro that he'd save the Earth from the asteroid that was now only days away from colliding with the blue-green world. He also knew that once he'd detonated the bomb, they would come looking for him, and they'd know where he was. Bem knew he'd be taken apart, rebuilt, and put to use for another purpose. At least he'd done something good, that made it all worthwhile.**

He placed the bomb in a deep crater on the asteroid, and set the time. Once a safe distance away, he waited for the detonation. At the last minute, something went wrong. Maybe the evil Norikans who had tried to capture him and the bomb had damaged the device, maybe Bem himself had been compromised. Bem counted down the seconds till detonation. The time passed, and then, nothing! The bomb failed to go off! Bem waited a bit longer, and then decided he'd better double check the detonator to make sure it was set. Just as he started back to the asteroid, the bomb exploded.

The timer had ran slow by some forty percent. Just long enough to fool him, to trap him. The blast knocked Bem out, and then he was plastered by debris from the asteroid that was atomized into particles no larger than grains of sand. It was like being in a hailstorm of sandpaper. Bem was smashed against a bolder the size of a car. He was then buried in a rain of sand like debris, encased in a ball of material from the planetoid that his weapon had torn apart. Gradually, the ball of rock went into orbit around the sun to forever circle the star in a path just inside the orbit of the first planet.

Astro watched the sky change color from a deep red hue to a brilliant white as the blast wave from the super bomb made it to Earth. The wind picked up to near hurricane force. Trees fell over. The sonic shock wave smashed windows on tall skyscrapers. For nearly a minute the world seemed to be coming to an end as the asteroid's death cry blew past the planet that it had almost consumed. Then a calm slowly came upon the Earth. The winds grew quiet, the shaking subsided, and the clouds parted. For the first time in many weeks, the sun's friendly face again appeared in the blue sky. Bem had done what he'd promised, he destroyed the asteroid. He'd saved the world.

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><p>Astro watched from the nose of the rocket as the device was jettisoned. The anti-neutrino bomb drifted free from his rocket and was on a direct path towards the sun's corona. If Napoleon's knowledge of science was as good as he claimed, the world would be saved. Astro watched through a telescope, tracking the path of the projectile.

Then he saw it. An uncharted asteroid not much larger than an automobile had collided with the torpedo. The device would now never reach the sun, it would just graze the surface of the outer reaches of the corona, useless. He knew there was only one way to save the mission, and he didn't give a second thought to the cost. Astro exited the spacecraft and rocketed himself toward the missile. Grabbing hold of the device, he pushed it away from the large space boulder and into the sun. His action pushed the small asteroid into a higher orbit while he and the anti-neutrino device were captured by the sun's immense gravity and pulled inward. Astro began to melt from the heat, his systems shut down as he felt his life force ebbing. He took one last glance backwards at the planet he was saving and felt happy.

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><p>The space rock that had been in orbit for some decades cracked open from the force of the missile smashing into it, and from the heating effect of the sun's radiance. The small robot that had been encased in rock began to come back to life, having been freed from the cocoon. Bem blinked and looked around him. He looked towards the sun and saw a familiar looking object, slightly deformed from the effect of the intense heat. His electronic computer brain told him what, no who it was. Bem knew that his own body was made of material that could withstand the intense heat, but his margin of safety would be small. He dove towards the star and grabbed hold of the hapless victim of its fury.

With Astro firmly in his grip, Bem flew away from the sun. He fought against its gravity and intense radiation. The effort took all of his remaining strength. Now virtually out of power, Bem put himself into a trajectory towards the third planet. He closed his eyes and went to sleep. Hopefully, someone on Earth would spot them in orbit and bring them back to the surface.

* * *

><p>It had been a year since human kind had returned

home. Professor Ochanomizu spent every clear night at the telescope, scanning the skies looking for Astro. He finally had given up the search, having come to the inescapable conclusion that the boy robot had been destroyed in his effort to save the planet.

All over the Earth, statues of Astro had been commissioned. He was almost worshiped as a saint, and he'd been mourned as a fallen hero. To the professor Astro had been like a son, his child, and he mourned his loss as he would his own flesh and blood. After giving up the search for him at the observatory, Ochanomizu decided he'd accept a transfer to the moon base in an attempt to get his mind off of his loss.

The professor sat in the cockpit jump seat of the small scout rocket, just behind the pilot and first officer. It had been a long time since he'd last been in space, and he'd forgotten how rough the takeoff could be in one of these small but powerful spacecraft. They reached Earth orbit quickly and prepared for trans-lunar injection for the trip outbound.

Captain Ketchup was about to initiate the course change when the collision warning radar sounded. "What's going on?" The professor asked.

"Nothing to worry about," the pilot assured him. "Every now and then some uncharted bit of space junk shows up and we have to make a small detour. Happens every third or fourth flight I'd say. The system can handle it."

"Where is this debris?" Ochanomizu asked. "I'd like to get a visual on it."

"I think we can align our long range telescope to get a view," first officer Glenn replied. "But it won't be anything interesting. The last time this happened the debris we had to avoid turned out to be a space toilet that had been lost off of an old Russian Soyuz space station nearly a century ago."

He quickly punched up the commands to get the viewer on line. An image slowly formed on the computer screen. It was blurry at first, but quickly sharpened as the computer performed some high def image processing.

"What the hell!" Ochanomizu gasped. Floating thousands of clicks ahead of them were two small robots. Both were clearly in an un-powered state. It took the professor a few moments to recognize the first of them. "Why that's Bem!" he gasped.

"Bem?" Ketchup asked.

"Yes, he was a robot that came to Earth some decades ago with a super bomb." Ochanomizu explained. "The last we saw of him, he used that bomb to destroy an asteroid that was about to smash into the Earth."

"I remember that," Glenn spoke up. "I was in orbit when that bomb exploded."

"He seems to be holding on to a badly damaged robot about his size," Ketchup remarked, studying the image.

"You're right." the professor said. "But I can't make out the details, can you zoom in any closer?"

"On it." Glenn said, keying in the commands to the computer. The image became larger and better focused.

"It's ASTRO!" the professor gasped. "He looks partially melted, but I can recognize him none the less. Captain, can you change course and pick them up?"

"I'll have to clear that with control," Ketchup replied, "But I'll do it! I assume you'll also want to abort our trans-lunar injection and return to Earth at once."

"You've read my mind, Captain!" Ochanomizu replied.

* * *

><p>He opened his eyes and blinked. It was difficult to move, he felt like the Tin Woodsman must have felt after standing in the rain and then seeing Dorthy's face years later. Bem smiled at him. "Welcome back buddy." he grinned.

Astro tried to talk, but found he could only whisper. "How did..." was all he managed to get out.

"Take it easy friend," Bem told him. "I found you in orbit around the sun after I was released from a rocky prison where I had been sleeping for some time."

"You were badly damaged from the sun's heat," the professor told him. "It will take me some time to replace all of your broken parts. Just take it easy."

"Help me sit up" Astro asked, slowly managing to get the words out of his mouth.

Bem carefully lifted Astro's head and shoulders off of the bed. The boy robot's body creaked as his frozen joints protested the treatment, but he managed to get partly upright. He slowly held out his arms and motioned to the professor. The two of them exchanged a long hug before Astro slowly laid back down again, and managed to weakly smile.

"Welcome back son!" Ochanomizu said softly, welcome back!

Astro gazed at Bem's face before closing his eyes. "ArigatÅ• gozaimashita" he said as he drifted to sleep.

* * *

><p>Mustachio stopped dead in his tracks as the aroma wafting though the air tickled his nose. He turned his head and sniffed, trying to determine from where the incredible fragrance was coming from. The effect on his olfactory triggered a sudden release of endorphin that flooded his brain's pleasure centers, causing him to drool with hunger.

Mustachio then spotted the new sign being hung in front of the

storefront across the street. Astro hovered in mid air, holding the sign in place with one hand while inserting a bolt to attach it to the building with his other. The middle school teacher observed that the sign was plain and unattractive, it simply read 'Bakery'.

As he entered the establishment he was overcome by the heavy scent of the pastry that filled the shelves behind the glass counter. A robot with a large head of hair, covered by a tall baker's cap waved to him, and quickly returned his attention to his work as he popped a large tray into the oven to bake.

Astro then walked into the shop, "Sign's hung up, Bem!" he announced. "I guess we're ready for business!"

Mustachio placed his hands on his hips and smiled. "So you two have gone and done it, you're going into business?"

"That we have, Sensei." Astro smiled.

"Here, Mustachio San," Bem said, holding a tray out to the teacher. "Try some, it's on the house!"

Higeoyaji stuffed a bun into his mouth and started to chew. The effect on his face was instantaneous. "My god!" he gasped, "This is incredible! I've never tasted anything like this. Sweet, but not overpoweringly so, with just enough tartness and a hint of Wasabi and green tea."

"Glad you like it, sir." Bem smiled.

"I'm glad you decided to open a bake shop," Mustachio said. "It will be the best one in town!"

"Well actually, Astro insisted on it." Bem said. "He helped me get set up, and did most of the repair work on the building."

"Well when word of mouth gets around, you two are going to have to hire extra help!", Higeoyaji laughed as he walked out. "My My", he thought, "how wonderful to have Astro back, and Bem too!"

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